

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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The ideas of **Roger Johnson** are unlimited and exceedingly pertinacious. For 33 years, since he first conceived the idea (originally *The Sherlock Holmes Society of London Grapevine Service*), he has compiled and distributed this newsletter with a dogged irregularity, paying close attention to facts and figures in order to keep us informed of incidents curious and whimsical, publications of note, and all those other Holmesian happenings that are so dear to us. It has been a sustained labour of love, not just for Sherlock Holmes, but for all of us who share Roger's enthusiasm. He has placed great trust in me by handing over his creation as he attempts to relax into retirement, and I can only hope to replicate his dedication and do him proud. You can still enjoy Roger's work as editor of our bi-annual Journal, and you can read the entire back catalogue of *The District Messenger* on our website: <http://www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/newsletter/>

Full details and booking information for our **May events** will be released very soon. Dates and brief details are on our website now <http://www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/events/>

We have the BFI to thank for the much-anticipated release this week of the classic BBC *Sherlock Holmes* series starring **Douglas Wilmer**, whom we are very proud to have as an honorary member. For years we have waited, and here it is: all surviving footage, reconstruction of episodes partially lost, audio commentaries, an interview with Wilmer, and an accompanying booklet featuring contributions from our own **Nicholas Utechin, Roger Johnson, and Jonathan and Elaine McCafferty**. It was worth the wait. As a complete newcomer, I am in awe, and it is a delight to finally watch the series beloved by our members who were children in the 60s. Despite its age, after years of re-imaginings and reinterpretations, watching an adaptation that revels in Doyle's stories feels fresh. This is an essential item for any Holmesian collection. To celebrate the release - the first time the series has been made available in the UK - the BFI have a copy to giveaway. **For your chance to win, simply answer the following question:**

In which year did Douglas Wilmer first portray Sherlock Holmes on screen? A) 1962 B) 1964 C) 1966

Please send your answer to alex.prideaux@bfi.org.uk directly by **Friday 10 April**. Winners will be notified via email.

Londoners: be on the lookout for promotional activities around this release. Posters are displayed at Baker Street Tube Station, Foyles on Charing Cross Road has a marvellous display, and you should find 'business cards' displayed in museums and shops throughout the city.

It is with some urgency I must remind you that the Sherlock Holmes exhibition at the **Museum of London** closes on 12th April. If you have not been and you are able: go before it is too late. Where else are you ever likely to see two Beeton's Christmas Annuals together in your lifetime, accompanied by Doyle's notes for *A Study in Scarlet*, a mere few feet away from original illustrations by Sidney Paget, and all the other treasures on display? Do not miss this.

Complementing the exhibition has been a season of special film screenings supported by the BFI <http://filmlondon.org.uk/Sherlock>. Several of us have enjoyed a series of Eille Norwood silents with live accompaniment recently at the Barbican. The Norwood films are great fun and include some memorable Canonical substitutions: Holmes infiltrating a play starring Irene 'Adair', a fight with Moriarty at Cheddar Gorge, and the Aurora replaced by a speed boat chase! If you missed these, there are still plenty of interesting cinema showings around London in the very near future:

The Phoenix Cinema in Finchley is putting on a late night showing of *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* in original 35mm projection this Friday 3rd April at 11.30pm <http://www.phoenixcinema.co.uk/whatson/?progid=7040014>, *Basil the Great Mouse Detective* on Saturday 4th April at noon <http://www.phoenixcinema.co.uk/whatson/?progid=7040003> and on Sunday 5th April there's another chance to see **Eille Norwood** accompanied by Stephen Horne at 7.30pm <http://www.phoenixcinema.co.uk/whatson/?progid=7040023>

On Saturday 4th April at 11.30pm, The Rio Cinema on Kingsland Road presents the first UK screening of Hammer's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* since it was newly HD remastered. The film will be introduced by critic, writer, and our guest speaker from the Annual Dinner in 2013: **Kim Newman**. http://www.riocinemaonline.org.uk/oscarwebserver.dll/TSelectItems_waSelectItemsPrompt.TcsWebMenuItem_1015466.TcsWebTab_1015506.TcsPerformance_6949358.TcsSection_992. The Blu-ray of this newly remastered edition is due for release on Monday 1st June and will include some new special features.

Kim Newman notes on his blog the release on DVD of a classic **German TV series** that used the same scripts as the Douglas Wilmer episodes: <http://johnnyalucard.com/2015/02/27/sherlock-holmes-completists-might-be-interested/>

On Friday 10th April, there is a **Sherlock Film Night** at the Museum of London, tickets still available: <http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/london-wall/whats-on/events-calendar/event-details/?eventID=7058>

The internet is heaving with rumours about the upcoming Christmas special and fourth series of the BBC's *Sherlock*. No doubt the cast and crew will be pressed for information at the upcoming official *Sherlock* convention **Sherlocked** at ExCel London from 24th to 26th April. Featuring set displays, Q&As, and opportunities for photographs with the stars (Benedict Cumberbatch is booked, but Martin Freeman is not), this is certainly an enticing event for fans of the series. Full details and ticket purchases via the *Sherlocked* website: <http://www.sherlocked.com/>

BBC Films have announced the UK release date for *Mr Holmes*, their adaptation of Mitch Cullin's *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, starring **Sir Ian McKellan**: 19th June 2015.

As reported in our previous edition, the **Wellcome Collection** are running an exhibition titled *Forensics: An Anatomy of Crime* from 26th February until 21st June this year. There is certainly some content to entice those of us who share Holmes's interest in crime and detection. I was particularly impressed by some original sketches from the Crippen trial, and tried to determine if Doyle was included in a full picture of Court 1. I certainly spied a likely candidate with a moustache. If you have the opportunity to view this and want to indulge in Doyle-spotting, he was reported to be sitting behind the Bar benches on the first day of the trial, facing the jury. The exhibition is free to attend <http://wellcomecollection.org/forensics>

These sketches are on loan from the Scotland Yard **Crime Museum**, and, as you may have already seen, it has now been announced officially that the next big exhibition at the Museum of London will be a display from this famous collection: the first time many of its items have been available to be viewed by the public. Doyle viewed the Museum as it was back in December 1892, when it was in the basement of the Norman Shaw buildings on Victoria Embankment. Roger informs me that the Society was allowed a viewing of the Museum around the 150th anniversary of the Met in 1979 (though sadly this was not reported in our Journal at the time). The exhibition will be titled *The Crime Museum Uncovered* and runs from 9th October 2015 to 10th April 2016. Tickets are already on sale: <http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/london-wall/whats-on/exhibitions-displays/the-crime-museum-uncovered/>

ITV's recent three-part drama *Arthur and George*, starring Martin Clunes as Doyle, will be released on DVD on Monday 13th April. Described as an adaptation of Julian Barnes' novel (though it only does this in a loose sense), this is by no means a clinical look at the Edalji case, but it is an engaging Doylean drama with plenty of Holmesian atmosphere, reminiscent of the BBC's *Murder Rooms*.

Robert Graham sends word that the Theatre Royal in Windsor will be staging *Sherlock Holmes and the Ripper Murders* by Brian Clemens (creator of the 1970s ITV show *Thriller*, an episode of which featured Jeremy Brett). It will star Brian Capron and Neil Roberts and run from Monday 13th to Saturday 18th July. <http://www.theatreroyalwindsor.co.uk/details.php?id=344>

On Friday 6th March, a small group of Society members including myself ventured to the theatre space on the top floor of The Spread Eagle pub in Croydon, to attend a performance of a one man show titled *Holmes Alone*, by the **Don't Go Into the Cellar!** Theatre Company. A life-threatening event foregrounded a sequence of flashbacks, as Holmes recalled and recreated some of his greatest moments and vilest adversaries. Holmes was performed by Jonathan Goodwin with a distinctly Brettish flavour, invoking the occasional aftertaste of Downey Jr. It was a sustained performance with impressive use of costume, and enjoyable moments when the fourth wall was broken to include the audience in the retelling, but there was little original plot beyond this to excite the seasoned Holmesian playgoer.

Don't Go Into the Cellar! will be performing as part of **Conan Doyle Con** at The City Tavern in Birmingham on Saturday 30th May. Also on the bill are two book launches: *Challenger Unbound* edited by UCL's Tom Ue, and *Mycroft and the Necromancer* by Michael R Bush. Full details and ticket booking here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/conan-doyle-con-tickets-16295793156>

Oscar Ross sends word of a screening of *Murder by Decree* as part of the Belfast Film Festival programme. Oscar notes that the film at an apt location: Freemasons' Hall, Arthur Square. Details of this can be found on the website of The Crew of the S.S. May Day. <http://www.thessmayday.org.uk/2015/03/25/news-bulletin-246/>. There is also an upcoming event in Belfast marking the 90th anniversary of Doyle's visit to the city, at which Oscar will be speaking <http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/events/Event-46006.aspx>.

Sad news from Solihull: the Berkswell Museum, which houses a **Jeremy Brett** Exhibition, is faced with closure <http://www.berkswell-history.org/berkswellmuseum.html>

The BBC reports that plans to turn **Undershaw** (Doyle's sadly neglected home in Hindhead, Surrey) into a school for children with disabilities looks set to go ahead: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-surrey-32122360>

Trigger Warning: Short Fictions and Disturbances, a collection of short stories and poems by **Neil Gaiman**, was released on 3rd February. Within this collection is a story titled 'The Case of Death and Honey', in which an aging Holmes tries to solve the greatest mystery of all. As those familiar with Gaiman's work would expect, there is an element of magical realism in this story, which plays with the idea of Holmes as immortal. The most striking element for me, however, was a very moving passage about Mycroft. Through this unusual adventure, Gaiman considers Holmes as a man of his time and a hero for all time (Headline, hardback RRP £18.99 <https://www.headline.co.uk/Books/detail.page?isbn=9781472217684>).

Dreaming Spies, the 13th and latest addition to Laurie R. King's **Mary Russell** series, was released on 24th February. Set in 1925, the plot sees Holmes and Russell caught up in a plot involving a mysterious stone, blackmailers, and ninjas. As usual, King demonstrates an intricate knowledge of the Canon (there is a lovely moment when the publication of 'The Sussex Vampire' is mentioned), and manages to interweave cultural and historical detail into a suspenseful plot. I still find that it requires some significant suspension of disbelief to read about Holmes as a married man, and often he is too easily relegated to the background, but if you are already a fan of the series then you are likely to enjoy this latest volume (Allison and Busby, hardback RRP £19.99 <http://www.allisonandbusby.com/book/dreaming-spies-hardback>)

We lost an icon of the fantasy genre on 12th March when **Sir Terry Pratchett** died at home, eight years after he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. The City Watch novels of his Discworld series contain many covert references to the Canon, and readers familiar with the books will know that Commander Sir Samuel Vimes is not a fan of Holmesian methods.

Sad news from the John H Watson Society as they have lost their 'Buttons', **Donald Libey**, who passed away on 15th March. Don was a much-loved founding member and leader of this relatively new society (founded almost precisely two years ago), and a full time member of The Sherlock Holmes Society of London. His name may also be familiar to you as the writer of *The Autobiography of Sherlock Holmes* (Campbell and Lewis Publishers, 2012) <http://johnwatsonsociety.com/archives/3432>

Roger has noted the death of **Michael Hayes**, who directed 'The Retired Colourman' for the BBC in 1965 (now available for us all to enjoy on DVD, of course), as well as 14 episodes of the Tom Baker *Doctor Who* series. His death is also noted by Peter Blau in the latest *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, March 15: <http://www.redcircledc.org/assets/files/Spermaceti/scuttlebutt-2015-03.pdf>

I hope to continue Roger's practice of noting periodicals received in the future so, if you have not done so already, do please note the new contact details above should you wish to send me anything such as this, or simply wish to alert me to news I might otherwise have missed.

Carters of Suffolk have alerted us to their new Sherlock Holmes themed teapot: <http://www.pressloft.com/product.php?pid=1119959>

And finally: have you ever wanted to recreate the entrance to 221B in your home? Try this: <http://goo.gl/STt4me>